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CHAPTER XI.

OF THE DIVISION OF THE ABIPONIAN NATION, OF THEIR PAUCITY, AND OF THE CHIEF CAUSES THEREOF.

To look for policy in savages will appear to you like seeking a knot in a bulrush, or expecting water from a flint. The Abipones, a nation obstinately attached to their ancient liberty, lived at their own pleasure, impatient of all controul. Their own will was their sole law. Nevertheless, as bees, ants, and every kind of animal, by natural instinct, observe certain peculiarities of their species, in like manner the most ferocious Indians pertinaciously retain, even to this day, certain customs, the ordinances of their nation, handed down to them by their ancestors, and regarded by them as laws. I shall proceed to treat of the political, economical, and military regulations of the Abipones, of their customs and magistrates.

The whole nation of the Abipones is divided into three classes: the Riikahès, who inhabit extensive plains; the Nakaigetergèhes, who love the lurking-holes of the woods; and lastly, the Yaaucanigas, who were formerly a distinct NATION, and used A separate language.

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101 nation, and used a separate language. In the
619 last century, the Spaniards, whom they had gone out to slaughter, surprized them by the way, and almost destroyed them all. A few who survived the massacre, with the widows and children of the slain, joined the neighbouring Abipones, and both nations, by inter-marriages, coalesced into one; the old language of the Yaaucanigas falling into disuse. The Abi-
619 ponian tribes pursue the same manner of life, and their customs and language, with the exception of a few words, are alike. Wondrous
[648] unanimity, and a constant alliance in arms, reigned amongst them as long as they had to deal with the Spaniards, against whom, as against a mutual foe, they bear an innate hatred, and whose servitude they resist with united strength. But though bound by the ties of consanguinity and friendship, impatient of the
[578] smallest injury, they eagerly seize on any occasion of war, and frequently weaken each other with mutual slaughter.

595 Like the other American savages, some of the
586 Abipones practise polygamy and divorce. Yet they are by no means numerous; the whole
161 nation consisting of no more than five thousand people. Intestine skirmishes, excursions against the enemy, the deadly contagion of the

h [i.e., the YAAUCANIGAS, A group of Abipon. – ANALYST]